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KEEPING LIVE SHRIMP FOR BAIT 511 FL 582

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Along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts of the United States the species of shrimp best adapted for keeping in boxes, ponds, or troughs for live bait are the grooved shrimp (Penaeus aztecus), and the common marine shrimp (Penaeus setiferus), both of the family Penaeidae.

Shrimp are taken the year-round. There are, however, two peaks of abundance, one in the fall and a smaller one during the spring and early summer. To attract the shrimp to a chosen fishing spot, bait a small area with minced clams or, as is sometimes done at New Orleans (La.), pack paste-like dog food in empty clam shells. After allowing the shrimp time to congregate, use a cast net.

An excellent method of catching live shrimp in larger quantities is to drag slowly for about 15 minutes behind a powered boat, or skiff, a small otter trawl of about 10-foot spread at the mouth, or a small beam trawl of about 6-foot spread. Employing this method of taking shrimp is contingent upon the laws of the State controlling the waters in which this operation is being conducted.

In Florida and the other Gulf States, dealers in live shrimp for bait hold them for indefinite periods in live boxes (pens) floating in salt water. These boxes are of various sizes and frequently covered with galvanized hardware screen. The screen is coated with asphaltum paint.

If wooden boxes are used for holding the shrimp, the inside should be coated with asphaltum paint to prevent corrosion from sea water. The number of shrimp to be held in a container depends on its size. A No. 2 galvanized tub will hold fifty shrimp.

The water in the boxes must be kept at a temperature not over 60°F.; the optimum temperature is 50-60°. The common practice is to have either a stream of water running through the tank or a continuous stream of air

2

passing through the water. If aeration is impossible, reduce the number of shrimp at least 80 percent. Even in well-aerated salt water, the shrimp will die rapidly when the water temperature rises. Keep the box under cover or in the shade in order to maintain the temperature of the water as low as possible. Do not allow the water to run from one box to another; this warms the water.

The boxes and the water must be kept clean. Shrimp from the first box may be removed to a second one while the first one is being cleaned. Do not permit waste products, such as food and excreta, to collect in the tank, as they will cause the water to become stagnant. Overcrowding will stagnate the water also.

Shrimp will eat a variety of foods. Minced clams, ground-up fish, and some of the canned dog foods are acceptable. Plant detritus, worms, crustacea, small mullusks, and mud and sand can be found in their intestinal tracts. Feeding the shrimp once a day is sufficient.